

## Introduction

We begin in the name of Allah from whom all things begin and to whom all things return. From Him alone do we seek help; He is the true source of abundance and from Him are all bounties.

Praise be to Allah, the first before any other and the last after whom there shall be no other. The one whom our eyes are unable to see and whose attributes cannot be comprehended by contemplation. He created the universe by His will, and then transformed the creation as He wished and showered them with His love.

O Allah! Bless Muhammad, the guardian of your revelation, the best of your creation, the leader of goodness, the key to divine bounty and the last of your prophets and messengers.

O Allah! Bless the family of Muhammad and his pure progeny and those from them who are closest to you, with the best blessings and bounties, and shower your all-encompassing and complete mercy on them; mercy that is endless and continuous. Amin – Lord of the universe.

Verily there are some fields of knowledge that are specific to those who are close to Allah, and these are those who are referred to as Prophets of Allah, and the last prophet who was sent by Allah for the guidance of mankind was the Holy Prophet Muhammad ibn ‘Abdullah (S).

Of the teachings and lessons that have come to us through him, a part of it is what has been revealed in the form of the Glorious Qur’an which is known as ‘*al-kitab*’ and the other part is based on his actions and sayings and this is known as ‘*al-sunnah*.’ From among the *sunnah* are the actions that the Noble Prophet gave importance to and always performed.

This book – which we present to those who are interested in scholarly research and study – contains narrations about the actions that the Holy Prophet (S) stressed upon, those that he always performed and those that describe his life, conduct and ways.

In this introduction we will present some general issues with the aim of clarifying the subject which is discussed in this book and these are summarized as follows:

The word 'adab' used in classical and colloquial 'Arabic has various meanings such as:

- Elegance, gracefulness and meticulousness in affairs
- Coming together of a community on an issue
- Obedience and respect to others
- Sciences and knowledge, praiseworthy conduct and good behaviour
- A positive force in a person that enables him to refrain from evil deeds

Adab also refers to some introductory sciences like the study of language, grammar, correct use of similes and idioms, eloquence in speech and poetry. It also refers to nobility of character, purity of the soul and perfection of the self.

As for 'adeeb', it refers to the teacher, the author and the orator. Similarly, it is used for anyone who has mastery over poetry and language, use of metaphors, effective speech and eloquent presentation.

The word 'sunnah' also has many meanings amongst which are: growth, maturity, clarity of speech, the graceful galloping of a horse, brushing the teeth, crying and flowing.

Sunnatullah refers to Allah's commandments, His Will and pre-ordinances as well as His punishments and rewards.

*Sunnah* is also used to mean: the conduct, nature, origin, divine laws, choosing a particular route and following of desires and opinions.

These are the different meanings of the words adab and *sunnah*.

However, that which fits in with our discussion here is that: all actions that are accepted by the intellect and religion, if acted upon in the best and most excellent manner, would be referred to as 'adab'. The person who has adab always performs his actions and dealings in the most graceful and elegant manner. As for the attributes that are concerned with purity of the soul, perfection of the self and the innermost part of the human being – like generosity, courage, justice, forgiveness, mercy and all other humanly attributes – these come under the title of 'akhlaq'.

To put it in another way, adab forms the attributes of the actions of a person as they are performed in the 'real' world whereas akhlaq consists of the attributes of the inner self. These two meanings are in this way linked to each other.

Based on this, it would be wrong to use the word 'adab'<sup>1</sup> for actions that are not praiseworthy in the eyes of the intellect and religion such as: injustice, cheating, lying, miserliness, jealousy and the like; and this also applies to actions that are out of the control of human beings.

Similarly *sunnah* consists of the attributes of human actions, bearing in mind that the meaning of *sunnah* is more general than that of *adab* since *sunnah* refers to the good and evil ways whereas *adab* is only used to mean beautiful actions that are praiseworthy in the specific and general sense.

The Noble Prophet (S) said: “Excellent *adab* is the ornament of the intellect.”<sup>2</sup>

Imam Ali (as) says: “The *adab* are like new attires.”<sup>3</sup>

Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba (as) said: “One who has no intellect has no *adab*.”<sup>4</sup>

Indeed the ahadith about *adab* are numerous.

The human being is – based on his knowledge, beliefs, thoughts and emotions – of course bound by a chain of *adab* and *sunnah*<sup>5</sup>, with which his life starts and ends.

The *adab* and *sunnah* exemplify the spirituality of a community and reveal people’s thoughts and beliefs. Their growth and decline, successes and failures, progress and regress are all dependent on their *adab* and *sunnah*. Similarly, the only way to know an individual is by the *adab* and the *sunnah* that are particular to him and show his thoughts and opinions.

The *adab* and *sunnah* that have been found in different communities to date can be summarized into four types:

- The *adab* and *sunnah* based on superstition
- The *adab* and *sunnah* generally accepted by the masses
- *adab* and *sunnah* of the scholars and those with wisdom
- *adab* and *sunnah* of the prophets, messengers and infallible Imams (as)

It is not possible for us to pinpoint the exact time or location where the *adab* and *sunnah* based on superstition or those that became generally accepted by the masses began. We can say for sure, however, that there appeared among the monotheists a special form of *adab* and *sunnah*, from the time of Adam (as) until today, which is different from all the other forms of *sunnah*. This type of *sunnah* and *adab* is above the intellect and comprehension of human beings, and man is unable to reach it by his mind or senses. It is outside the realm of his understanding. Only a special group of men called ‘the Prophets’ are able to attain it by means of divine inspiration and revelation and they then pass it on to all the people. This type of *sunnah* and *adab* is based on a divine system that guarantees the success of human beings in this life and in the hereafter, materially and spiritually.

Allah (SWT) has taken it upon Himself to guide the Prophets in the Noble Qur’an and has endorsed their *adab* and *sunnah* and approved of their relationship with the people.

In Surah al-An'am (6), after praising Prophet Ibrahim (as), all other prophets from his lineage as well as from the lineage of Nuh (as) are mentioned. He (SWT) says:

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ كُلًّا هَدَيْنَا وَنُوحًا هَدَيْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِ دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُوسُفَ وَمُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ وَزَكَرِيَّا وَيَحْيَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَإِيلِيَّاسَ كُلٌّ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيُونُسَ وَلُوطًا وَكُلًّا فَضَّلْنَا عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ وَمِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ وَإِخْوَانِهِمْ وَاجْتَبَيْنَاهُمْ وَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ذَلِكَ هُدَى اللَّهِ يَهْدِي بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَلَوْ أَشْرَكُوا لَحَبِطَ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ فَإِنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهَا هَؤُلَاءِ فَقَدْ وَكَلْنَا بِهَا قَوْمًا لَيَسُوًّا بِهَا بِكَافِرِينَ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ فَبِهِدَاهُمْ أَقْتَدِهِ قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرَى لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾

***“And We gave him Isaac and Jacob and guided each of them. And Noah We had guided before, and from his offspring, David and Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses and Aaron — thus do We reward the virtuous — and Zechariah, John, Jesus and Ilyas, — each of them among the righteous — and Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah and Lot — each We graced over all the nations — and from among their fathers, their descendants and brethren — We chose them and guided them to a straight path. That is God’s guidance: with it He guides whomever He wishes of His servants. But were they to ascribe any partners [to God], what they used to do would not avail them. They are the ones whom We gave the Book, the judgment and prophethood. So if these disbelieve in them, We have certainly entrusted them to a people who will never disbelieve in them. They are the ones whom God has guided. So follow their guidance. Say: ‘I do not ask you any recompense for it. It is just an admonition for all the nations’”. (Surat al-An’am (6): 84-90)***

And He (SwT) says in Surah al-Mumtahanah (60):

﴿...قَدْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ﴾ ﴿٤﴾

***“There is certainly a good exemplar for you in Abraham and those who were with him’”. (Surat al-Mumtahanah (60): 4)***

And it is narrated in Majma' al-Bayan that the phrase ‘...and those who were with him’ refers to the other prophets.”

In Surah ale 'Imran (3), He (SwT) says:

﴿إِنَّ أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِإِبْرَاهِيمَ لَلَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ وَهَذَا النَّبِيُّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾ ﴿٦٨﴾

***“Indeed the nearest of all people to Abraham are those who follow him, and this prophet and those who have faith, and God is the guardian of the faithful’”. (Surat Ale Imran (3): 68)***

Among other similar verses,

It has been narrated by al-Tabarsi in Makarim al-Akhlaq and by Sharif al-Rad'i in Nahj al-Balagha that Imam 'Ali (as) said in one of his speeches: "And certainly the Prophet (S) was a sufficient example for you and a proof against the vices of the world, its defects, the multitude of its disgraces and its evils, because its sides had been constrained for him, while its flanks had been spread for others; he was deprived of its milk and turned away from its adornments.

If you want, I will, as a second example, relate to you concerning Musa (as), the Interlocutor of Allah, when he said:

***"O Allah! I need whatever good Thou mayest grant me." (Surat al-Qasas (28): 24).***

By Allah, he asked Him only for bread to eat because he was used to eating the herbs of the earth, and the greenness of the herbs could be seen from the delicate skin of his belly due to his thinness and the paucity of his flesh.

If you wish I can give you a third example of Dawud (as). He was the holder of the Psalms and the reciter among the people of Paradise. He used to prepare baskets of date palm leaves with his own hands and would say to his companions: "Who will help me by purchasing it?" He used to eat barley bread (bought) out of his earnings.

If you desire I will tell you about 'Isa, son of Maryam (as). He used a stone for his pillow, put on coarse clothes and ate dry food. His condiment was hunger. His lamp at night was the moon. His covering during the winter was just the expanse of earth eastward and westward. His fruits and flowers were only from what grew from the earth for the cattle. He had no wife to allure him, nor any son to grieve, nor wealth to deviate (his attention), nor covetousness to disgrace him. His two feet were his conveyance and his two hands his servants."<sup>6</sup>

Al-Daylami has quoted Imam 'Ali (as) in his book Irshad al-Qulub stating the importance of following the examples of the prophets' (as) lives. He said: "As for Nuh (as), despite being the elder of the prophets who lived for a long period (in some narrations it is mentioned that he lived for two thousand five hundred years), he passed away from this world while he had not yet built a house for himself. When he would see the day he would say: 'I may not get to see the night' and when he would see the night he would say: 'I may not get to see the day.'

Similarly, our Prophet Muhammad (S) passed away from this world without having placed one brick upon another. He once saw a man building a house with baked bricks and plaster so he (S) said: 'The affair is more cursory than this.'

As for Ibrahim (as), the father of the prophets, his clothes were made of coarse wool and his food was made from barley.

Yahya ibn Zakariyya (as) used to wear clothes made of palm fibers and ate leaves from trees.

Despite his vast kingdom, Sulayman (as) used to wear rough fur and when night fell, he would place his hands on his neck and weep, remaining this way until dawn. His food would consist of palm leaves that he would crush with his own hands and he had only asked Allah for the kingdom to be able to gain power and defeat the kingdoms of disbelievers and subjugate them. It is also said that he asked Allah for contentment.”<sup>7</sup>

There are many such ahadith. To sum up, it has been mentioned in the authentic narrations that: ‘The best *sunnah* is the *sunnah* of the prophets’<sup>8</sup> and especially the *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) who is the last of the prophets. For his way of life is the best example for mankind to emulate. It has also been narrated: “The best of the *sunnah* is the *sunnah* of Muhammad (S).”<sup>9</sup>

The glorious Qur’an has in many instances praised the conduct, morals, method of dealing with people and the way of life of the Noble Prophet (S). In Surah ale ‘Imran (3) it is stated:

﴿...فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ﴾

***“It is by God’s mercy that you are gentle to them; and had you been harsh and hardhearted, surely they would have scattered from around you”. (Surat Ale ‘Imran (3): 159)***

He has been described as possessing sublime morality in Surah al-Qalam (68):

﴿ وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴾

***“And indeed you possess a great character”. (Surat al-Qalam (68): 4)***

Then in Surah al-Ahzab (33), human beings have been ordered to take his way of life as a model to follow:

﴿...لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ﴾

***“In the Apostle of God there is certainly for you a good exemplar” ... (Surat al-Ahzab (33): 21)***

He ﴿ says in Surah ale ‘Imran (3):

﴿ قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴾

***“Say: ‘If you love God, then follow me; God will love you and forgive you your sins, and God is***

***all-forgiving, all-merciful***". (Surat Ale 'Imran (3): 31)

Also:

﴿... يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ﴾

***"O you who have faith! Answer God and the Apostle when he summons you to that which will give you life"***... (Surat al-Anfal (8): 24)

Shaykh Mufid has narrated in his al-Amali from Imam al-Baqir (as) that the Holy Prophet (S) said on his deathbed: "There is no prophet after me and no *sunnah* after my *sunnah*." [10](#)

It is narrated in Jami' al-Akhbar from the Holy Prophet (S) that he used to say: "Respect my offspring and adopt my *adab*." [11](#)

In an authoritative hadith, it is mentioned that the Noble Prophet (S) used to say: "My Lord disciplined me with the best discipline." [12](#)

Ibn Sha'bah al-Harrani has narrated in Tuhf al-'Uqul that Imam 'Ali (as) said: "Follow the guidance of the Holy Prophet (S) for it is the best guidance and adopt his *sunnah* for it is the most noble." [13](#)

It has been mentioned in the speech cited earlier from Imam 'Ali (as) that he said: "You should follow your Prophet, the pure, the chaste, may Allah bless him and his progeny. In him is the example for the follower and the consolation for the seeker of consolation. The most beloved person before Allah is he who follows His Prophet and who treads in his footsteps. He took the least (share) from this world and did not take a full glance at it. Of all the people of the world, he was the least sated and the most empty of stomach. The world was offered to him but he refused to accept it. When he knew that Allah, the Glorified, hated a thing, he too hated it; that Allah held a thing low, he too held it low; that Allah held a thing small, he too held it small.

If we love what Allah and His Prophet hate and hold great what Allah and His Prophet hold small that would be enough isolation from Allah and transgression of His commands.

The Prophet used to eat on the ground, and sat like a slave. He repaired his shoes with his own hands and patched his clothes with his own hands. He would ride on an unsaddled donkey and would seat someone behind him. If there was a curtain on his door with pictures on it he would say to one of his wives: "O so-and-so! Take it away out of my sight because when I look at it, I recall the world and its allurements." Thus, he distanced his heart from this world and removed its remembrance from his mind. He wished that its allurements should remain hidden from his eyes so that he should not take wealth from it, nor regard it a place of stay and hope to live in it. Consequently, he removed it from his mind, distanced it from his heart and kept it hidden from his eyes. Just as he who hates a thing would hate to look at it or to hear about it.

Certainly there was in the Prophet of Allah all that would apprise you of the evils of this world and its defects, when he remained hungry in it along with his special companions, and despite his nearness to them, the allurements of the world remained remote from him. So let the observer observe with his intelligence; did Allah honor Muhammad (S) as a result of this or disgrace him? If he says that Allah disgraced him, he certainly lies – by Allah – and perpetrates a great untruth. If he says Allah honored him, he should know that Allah dishonored the other when He extended the (allurements of the) world for him, but held them away from the one who was the nearest to Him of all men.

Therefore, one should follow His Prophet, tread in his footsteps and enter through his entrance; otherwise he will not be safe from ruin. Certainly, Allah made Muhammad (S) a sign for the Appointed Time, a conveyor of glad tidings of paradise and a warner of retribution. He left this world hungry but entered upon the next world complete. He did not lay one stone upon another (to make a house) until he passed away and responded to the call of his Lord. How great is Allah's blessing to us that He blessed us with the Prophet as a predecessor whom we follow and a leader whom we emulate!

By Allah, I have been putting so many patch in this shirt of mine that now I feel shy of its tailor. Someone asked me if I would put it off, but I said: 'Leave me – for only in the morning do people praise the night journey.'" [14](#)

It is narrated in Makarim al-Akhlaq from as-Sadiq (as): "I would hate for a man to pass away from this world while still not having adopted any of the attributes of the Noble Prophet (S)." [15](#)

There are many similar narrations.

It is therefore imperative for us to pay attention to an important point i.e. the *sunnah* that is the subject of this book is different in meaning from what is meant by the historians, those who study the sirah and ahadith, and also the jurists. According to the historians and those who write the sirah, *sunnah* is taken to refer to the history of the life of the Noble Prophet (S), from his birth to his battles, and the history of the lives of his progeny, family and companions etc.

According to those who narrate the ahadith, *sunnah* refers to the sayings, actions or quiet approvals of an infallible. The 'ammah [16](#) consider only the Holy Prophet (S) to be infallible while according to the Shi'ah, the pure Imams (as) are also included with the Prophet (S).

In the terminology of the jurists, it refers to a recommended action as opposed to the other four categories of actions i.e.: Wajib (obligatory), Haram (prohibited), Makruh (abominable) and Mubah (permitted).

In the ahadith, *sunnah* includes all the actions and commandments mentioned and practiced by the Holy Prophet (S) like the number of rak'at in the daily prayers and its different recitations, the way to perform the Hajj pilgrimage, marriage and divorce etc. *Sunnah* refers to all these commandments and legal rulings in the narratives and ahadith.

As for the term *sunnah* used in this book – as we have previously mentioned – it has a more precise and confined meaning from all these meanings and that is: all the recommended actions that were practiced and taught by the Noble Prophet (S) in his lifetime.

It is a known fact for scholars that there were numerous *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet (S) and these have been recorded in hundreds of books and thousands of ahadith. Each narrator has mentioned a portion of them according to what relates to the subject of his book. To the best of my knowledge there are hardly any books from either of the two sects – Shi’ah and Sunni – that consist of complete compilations of narrations about the Prophet’s *sunnah* and *adab*. Rather, it could be said that nobody has, to date, authored a book such as this one, with these particulars.

It is clearly evident that a compilation of the narratives that are related to the *sunnah* and *adab* of the Holy Prophet (S) would be an important service that would help to protect the spirituality of Islam and as this type of book becomes a source of information about the lifestyle of a man from the most perfect of men, it is of utmost importance.

The only person who thought of this matter in our present time was ‘Allamah Taba’taba’i, author of the original version of this book. He gathered the narrations that describe the practices of the Holy Prophet (S) and talk of his *adab* and *sunnah* in a book he called ‘*Sunnah an-Nabi*’ thereby opening the way for a righteous lifestyle for one who wants it.

It is fair to say that this book has filled a gap in the Islamic culture of our current time. We can easily say that there are very few similar works in this field, rather it is a scholarly work that is the first of its kind, conceived by the respected author.

This outstanding work was written by the ‘Allamah about forty years ago in the fifties (1350 ah/1929 ce), that is, when he was still studying religious sciences in Najaf al-Ashraf and it was not until Sha’ban of 1391 ah/1970 ce that I had the honor of meeting him in Qum and I asked if it would be alright if I embarked upon the translation of this book into Farsi. The ‘Allamah accepted this proposal and granted me permission – in writing – to take up this task.

In the course of my translation (of the work into Farsi) and confirmation of the sources and references, I came across some narrations on the topic of the Prophet’s *sunnah* that had been missed by the respected author. I gathered these narrations in a separate file and presented it to the revered ‘Allamah at another meeting with him in Mashad al-Rid’a (as) and upon completion of review, he asked that these narrations should be included in the book under the title of “Addendums”.

In accordance with his instructions, I placed an addendum after each section of the book, maintaining the original order except the addendum to “The nature of the Prophet” which I put at the end of the book. I also added two new sections to the original work, namely the section on Hajj and on the uncommon narrations.

It is befitting to mention that the sources referred to in this book are from the works of Shi'a scholars and no references have been made to the books of Sunni authors with the exception of Ghazali's, *Ihya al-'Ulum* and Suyuti's, *al-Durr al-Manthur*.

This book is generally divided into three parts based on the life of the Noble Prophet (S):

His *sunnah* and *adab* with his Lord i.e. his method of worship and supplication

His *sunnah* and *adab* with different categories of people i.e. his *adab* of social interaction

All his other *sunnah* and *adab*, like his *adab* while traveling, eating, dressing etc. which we will call his individual and personal *adab*

We pray to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, to grant us the inspiration and will to be able to follow in the footsteps and adopt the traits of the Holy Prophet (S).

O Allah! Bestow your sublime blessings and greatest favors on your Prophet, Muhammad (S). Grant him a lofty status in your proximity, reward him with multiple rewards out of your Grace, complete in him the light of perfection and bring us together with him in paradise. O Allah! Help us to practice his *sunnah* in our lives and to be beneficiaries of his intercession – Amin.

Muhammad Hadi al-Fiqhi

20th Dhil-Qa'dah al-Haram 1394 ah

- [1.](#) Plural of Adab. (Tr.)
- [2.](#) al-Bihar 77: 131
- [3.](#) Nahj al-Balaghah: 469 Saying no. 5
- [4.](#) Kashf al-Ghummah 1:571
- [5.](#) Plural of sunnah (Tr.)
- [6.](#) Nahj al-Balaghah: 226 Speech 160 and also narrated by al-Zamakhshari in Rabi' al-Abrar: section of despair and contentment.
- [7.](#) Irshad al-Qulub 1:157
- [8.](#) Man La Yahdhuruahu al-Faqih 4:402, no. 5868
- [9.](#) al-Ikhtisas: 342
- [10.](#) al-Amali of Shaykh al-Mufid: 53
- [11.](#) Jami' al-Akhbar: 140
- [12.](#) al-Bihar 16:210
- [13.](#) Tuhf al-'Uqul: 150
- [14.](#) Nahj al-Balaghah: 227 Speech 160
- [15.](#) Makarim al-Akhlaq: 95 Hadith no. 183
- [16.](#) A term used to refer to the Sunni Muslims. (Tr.)

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